

If we take together the combined influence of television and radio, the public's reliance on broadcasting is shown to be even greater—far greater than the reliance on all other media combined.

The polls—a series of five of them—were conducted by Roper Research Associates for the Television Information Office of the National Association of Broadcasters, between 1959 and 1967. Each one used a sample of about 2,000 people—representing a nationwide cross section of the adult population.

In the first poll, in 1959, television ranked second to newspapers as a source of information. In 1963, TV took the lead for the first time, and increased that lead in last year's poll.

On the second point—which medium to believe if there were conflicting reports, television has rated highest in each of the last four polls. Last year it was considered most reliable by almost twice as high a percentage as the runner-up—newspapers.

There is a great deal more evidence, some of which I will take up later, that makes clear beyond question the enormous influence of broadcasting as a news medium. But there is one crucial legal difference between broadcast and print news that I think we ought to keep in mind from the outset.

The newspaper or magazine journalist is influenced in reporting the news primarily by the traditional canons of American journalism: mainly, the stress on truth, accuracy, and objectivity.

Of course, the broadcast journalist also keeps these uppermost in mind. But he must also keep in mind that he is working in a medium that, unlike print, operates under Federal regulation that has an impact upon what is disseminated. The most influential of these Federal regulations, of course, is the fairness doctrine. I want to consider its effects more fully later on—after we have looked at some of the other differences between the impact of the broadcast news media—with special reference to television—and that of newspapers and magazines.

Television's greatest advantage, of course, is that it can give the viewer a closer approximation of concrete reality than any other medium.

It makes direct use of two of the five senses—sight and sound. Our object in the news business is to tell it like it is and television can do this by actually showing things as they are—or at least as they look and sound. Live television can convey these impressions instantaneously—at the very moment they are going on. There is no need to wait for the next edition.

Russell Lynes, the Harper's magazine editor and critic, recently wrote of television:

It reports ably after the fact, but it is when it is a substitute for one's own eyes, watching action as it happens, that it is more miraculous.

Who will ever forget the sun reflected in the eyes of Robert Frost so he could not read his poem at President Kennedy's inauguration? Who will forget the McCarthy hearings, the moment when Ruby shot Oswald, the smoke billowing from burning Detroit last summer? Television is the most remarkable transmitter of news ever devised because it is the first to be instantaneous.

Lynes might have mentioned radio here, too. It has been providing instantaneous coverage for many more years than television, although only in sound. Television—especially live television—has another important characteristic. Uniquely among the media, it affords people